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Influence of Social Ecology Movement on the Development of Environmental Journalism in Russia.

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the phenomenon of influence of social ecology movement on the development of environmental journalism in Russia in the 19-20th centuries. There are a number of objective reasons related with specifics of Russia's historical development - why the position of nature in the Russian society value hierarchy had been constantly changing. Under the circumstances, the defining role of keeping it among social priorities belonged to social ecology movement. The article evaluates the weight of the contribution that social ecology movement of tsarist and Soviet Russia made to the development of environmental journalism. It is important to study this subject matter as participation of environmental activists in the development of environmental journalism predetermined a number of its peculiar features and lines of development. In this article we are going to describe the development stages of environmental journalism in Russia in the light of ecology movement development: we will indicate functional area, main trends, key personalities and organisations which were important in its development.

Keywords: ecology, environment, environmental protection, nature, nature conservation activities, environmental activists, ecology movement, environmental organisation, greens, environmental journalism, environmental press, ecological communication, green mass media, environmental mass media.

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INTRODUCTION

Evolution of environmental journalism in one or another country in a certain period is, first of all, defined by two constituents – development level of social ecology movement and state of journalism system. At the meeting point of these two factors, as it the case with any other highly specialized area of journalism, the specifics of the represented subject, ecology and nature conservation activities in the present case, are of the greatest importance. Therefore, the issue of specifics and lines of development of nature conservation activities becomes the key issue for a researcher of environmental journalism and their further studies. Nature conservation management system is, in its turn, formed depending on a number of reasons: state system type, ruling ideology, social and economic conditions, development level of science, technology and social environmental culture, quality and quantity of natural and technogenic disasters, ecological situation in the region.

There are a number of Russian and foreign studies examining the phenomena of environmental journalism and social ecology movements in Russia and other countries of the world (Yanitsky, 2012; Cox, 2010; Chapman, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Zakharova, 2008; Kokhanova, 2007; Lyon, 2001; Fridman, 1988 et al), etc. Many of them agree that during all stages of its historical development ecology movement has been a tool of “soft power politics” in hands of such eco-political process factors as state power, business and scientific community (Nikonov, 2013; Baichik, 2015, Bekurov, 2015). To this end, environmental journalism was also subjected to the influence of these factors, which, in its turn, defined typological features characteristic of one or another stage of development of environmental journalism in Russia.

METHOD

The choice of methodological base in the work is defined by the subject matter and the subject of research. The issue of understanding the processes of formation and development of environmental journalism at the moment of formation and development of ecology movement under the influence of social, economic and political factors characteristic of the Russian society in the 19-20th centuries requires accessing original sources as the subject has not been studied thoroughly enough.

In the second half of the 19th century Russian journalism had already been a developed system of periodicals oriented towards different target groups (Gromova, 2013). “Having arisen in the 18th century and developing according to European tradition, it also adopted typological experience of European press to a large extent”. In Russia environmental journalism became an important part of a system maintaining vital activities of social nature conservation movement. The system appeared immediately after the first nature conservation societies, clubs and groups had been organised. Periodicals are the sources which contain the information about the history of nature conservation activities development, and they are characterized by freedom of speech in tsarist Russia and ideological misrepresentation in Soviet times. Moreover, in a number of cases it is the practice of the existence of environmental journalism, for instance, in the Soviet Union, which provides examples of active adoption of prerevolutionary traditions.

Publications devoted to the subject under consideration and published in environmentally-oriented prerevolutionary and Soviet editions are studied in the research in terms of objectivity and systemacy principles, unity of logical and historical approaches. The author addresses original sources: documentation regulating the work of nature conservation institutions and environmental organisations.

Empirical data is analysed in the research in terms of objectivity and systemacy principles, unity of logical and historical approaches. Historical and comparative analysis for tracing the dynamics of the development of ecology movement and environmental journalism is presented as the methodological basis in the research. In particular, this method is used for analysing the forms of participation of ecology movement in the political process and in the formation of environmental journalism.

RESULTS

The first prerequisites for the conception of environmental journalism in Russia appeared in the end of the 19th century. This period of time is associated with a whole series of large-scale geographical expeditions, as well as botanical and zoological research. The work of servicemen who carried out research

beyond the Arctic Circle, in the Caucasus and in Asia was highly important for this matter. University communities also showed great interest in nature. The works of Russian travellers and scientists were published in large numbers of copies; among them were *Life of animals* by A. Bram, *Desk book for hunters* by S. Buturlin, 17-volume *Nature* by L. Saboneev, etc.

Leonid Saboneev, zoologist and explorer of Asia, is one of the founders of Russian environmental journalism. He published not only scientific works, but also acted as the publisher and editor in the first periodicals about nature. In 1873 he started issuing *Nature* magazine, from 1874 to 1877 he issued and edited *Hunting Magazine*. Later, in 1878, L. Saboneev merged this magazine with *Imperial Society Hunting Magazine*. As a result, a new magazine *Nature and Hunting* appeared (Chibilev, 2014). From 1888 to 1897 the scientist acted as the editor of *Hunter's Newspaper*. Saboneev combined journalism with work in the first nature conservation societies: first, as a secretary, then as deputy chief of Moscow Nature Examiner Society, devised the Regulations of Russian Hunter's Club.

It should be noted that in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, at the same with adult environmental journalism, there also appeared children's periodical press. From 1902 to 1918 children's magazine *Svetlyachok* ("Firefly") was successfully issued (Choti, 2015), the readership of which consisted of children aged four to eight. One of the main goals of the magazine was to familiarize children with natural phenomena in an intelligible form. The material was informational, educational and entertaining.

In the end of the 19th century the first nature conservation communities started to form. Their appearance can be connected with onrush of industry and its ever-increasing technogenic impact on the environment. The newly-appeared social movement for protection of natural monuments was headed by: brothers V. Semyonov Tyan-Shansky, geographer, and A. Semyonov Tyan-Shansky, entomologist, botanists V. Taliev and I. Borodin, zoologists D. Soloviev and A. Kozhevnikov, forestry specialist G. Morozov, anthropologist and geographer D. Anuchin. These distinguished scientists were the first to propose an "ethical and esthetical approach to wild nature conservation and reserve management" (Choti, 2015), which was within the ideology of the then intellectuals. This fact is important since exactly the intellectuals mainly supported the new ecology movement and were the originators of environmentally-oriented journalism.

In 1890s the movement started to take initial steps in reserve management. For instance, Russian geologist and soil scientist V. Dokuchaev proposed creating special reserve centres. His associates supported the idea, and already in 1898 the first private biosphere reserve "Askania-Nova" was opened.

In the beginning of the 20th century state authority starts to pay attention to nature conservation problems. In 1912 the first permanent nature conservation committee under the Imperial Geographical Society was established. It formed the basis for the system of protection of Russia's natural heritage.

Central land management and agriculture office of Russian Agriculture Department also contributed to the development of reserve management by initiating more than fifty expeditions aimed at establishing nature reserves in Kamchatka, Pechora taiga, in the deltas of the Volga and the Sayan, in the Northern Ural and the Baikal region.

During the revolution and the change of political regimes ecology movement continued developing. In 1916 the first Russian state biosphere reserve, Barguzinsky Nature Reserve, was created in Buryatia. In 1917 V. Semyonov Tyan-Shansky proposed a unique project of a chain of nature reserves in Russia. In 1922 the initiative "On the needs of nature conservation in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialistic Republic" by G. Kozhevnikov, Russian reserve management theorist, was supported by the People's Commissariat and the Academy of Sciences (Boreyko, 2014). In 1923 G. Kozhevnikov together with a group of scientists sharing his ideas became a member of Natural Monuments Protection Committee under the People's Commissariat for Education of the Russian SFSR and in 1924 he became the chairman of temporary council of the society.

In 1920s soviet press touched upon such environmental topics as reserve management, development of nature conservation movement, V. Vernadsky's biosphere doctrine (Kokhanova, 2007). There appeared numerous state and regional magazines and bulletins: *Nature Conservation*, *Wild Life*, *Ural Hunter*, *Ukrainian Hunter's Bulletin*, etc. According to western scientists, the standard of Russian ecology was so high that in the

USA they still defend doctoral theses dedicated to this period of soviet history. Journalism of the 1920-30s was developing a new area: transforming scientific knowledge into understandable information (Sharkova, 2012).

In 1922 cooperative publishing house *Molodaya Gvardiya* under the Komsomol Central Committee began publishing a series of magazines and newspapers for children and teenagers: magazines *Murzilka*, *Rural Youth*, *Technology for the Youth*, *Young Naturalist*, *Molodaya Gvardiya*, *Vokrug Sveta* ("Around the World"), newspaper *Pionerskaya Pravda* ("Truth for Young Pioneers"). Children's soviet journalism adopted the experience of prerevolutionary journalism. Journalistic genres of prerevolutionary children's journalism rested upon folklore and literature traditions just as soviet children's journalism did. Among traditional topics for that period, apart from the life of soviet children and labour, were also nature and new village life. In 1928, when Central Bureau of Young Pioneers became in charge of publishing children's magazines, some of the editions started such new sections as *Forest Newspaper* and *Clever Photographer*.

Ecology movement, formed in 1920s with the help of civil initiatives, was gradually whittled away in the context of economic and political centralisation, as industrialization crossed nature conservation activities out of the list of country's priorities.

1940-50s in the USSR were a period of formation of anthropocentric nature enslavement ideology. In 1948 the main ideologist of Lysenkoism I. Prezent claimed that "it is ridiculous to protect nature from a soviet man" (Vorontsov, 1989). This slogan triggered a new ideological field of work for soviet mass media in coverage of social and political relations in "society-nature" system. The course was set for spreading the stereotype of a soviet man as conqueror of nature. The government did everything to put this slogan into action: a unique system of nature reserves was destroyed and the construction of harmful industrial productions began in their place; the funding of scientific and research projects was cut off; leader of ecology movement were repressed. "Since 1948, the whole post-war period was full of big and small conflicts between officious party science and real scientists and of discussions, many of which ended in a tragedy for their participants" (Yanitsky, 2001).

In the author's opinion, this historical period can be considered a starting point in the formation of a so far successful Russian "user's mentality" the point of which is in "parasitic" function of a man in relation to nature. Nature came to be in the very bottom of value hierarchy: "dominant and conquering behaviour patterns" spread among the society because of anti-ecology propaganda (Zakharova, 2008), conservation measures came to be perceived as a brake on progress. Ecology information was not available for journalists. All materials to be published were subject to strict multilevel party censorship, and so until mid-eighties environmental situation as described on the pages of newspapers seemed exceptionally positive.

In 1960s, when sanctions on ecologists were reduced, environmental concern of mass community started to increase. Local groups of eco-activists were formed. Researchers claim that the starting point of this was an incident which had had a serious technogenic impact on the environment – construction of a pulp and paper mill on Lake Baikal (1965-1970).

Except groups of eco-activists under natural-scientific and technical faculties of the country's universities and institutes, there also appeared Nature Preservation squads ("druzhina"). The first squad of that kind was formed in 1960 at the biology faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University. In 1972 about 30 squads united into Druzhinas for Nature Preservation Movement (DOP). Main activities of DOP included poaching control, fight against mass felling of fir-trees before winter holidays and picking wild plants, as well as organization of new nature conservation units and collaboration with local authorities concerning protection of particular species of animals and plants. Apart from that, Druzhinas for Nature Preservation Movement also implemented programs of environmental education for schoolchildren, environmental promotion and ecology tourism. By 1980 the movement had already included more than 100 squads all over the country.

During this initial stage of formation of ecology movement in Russia the principal "generating environment" was public opinion while central press, despite the censorship, became the main channel for expressing public protest (Yanitsky, 2001).

From 1960 to 1980 environmental journalism becomes romanticized. Soviet mass media and fiction develop the subjects of scientific expeditions and travels with geologists, ethnologists, zoologists and other

representatives of natural sciences as main characters. Journalism actively uses literary and publicistic genres. Feature stories and essays describing natural landscapes, flora and fauna of Siberia, Kamchatka and other picturesque regions of the country are published. Journalist and traveller V. Peskov was one of the first to start writing about nature in newspapers, and now in mass media environment he is considered the patriarch of Russian environmental journalism.

In 1970s the topic of augmenting the flora of the country becomes popular in soviet press. According to L. Kokhanova, the press began to show its organizational functions in nature conservation activities to help scientific inquiry (Kokhanova, 2007). Meanwhile, journalists covered the process of expeditions and ran competitions among their readers to take part in these expeditions, exchanged letters with schoolchildren, collaborated with scientists on materials, drew the attention of mass audience to scientific projects. It is a telling example that the press supported I. Michurin's initiative to collect required materials for selection experiments.

In 1970s the printed media brings together a large number of concerned young activists mobilizing them through journalistic materials. Therefore, it can be concluded that the function of nature conservation education proper for environmental journalism has a long-standing tradition and experience of implementation in mass media of the country.

In the 1980s the problem of access to ecology information became critical. One of the main goals of state information policy in the field of ecology was to carefully suppress environmental problems and catastrophes. Mass media described the USSR as an exceptionally problem-free area where there is no room for serious environmental problems. "Step by step, the principal axis of confrontation was formed: public opinion against bureaucratic opinion, that is, practically, public interest against corporate. <...> In fact, it was a prototype of the conflict between the state and civil society" (Yanitsky, 2001). The initiator and leading force of the conflict was the scientific community. Among main environments generating ecology activists were universities and science institute, creative unions and mass media, while squads remained the centres of the movement. As in the times of tsarist Russia, the role of the intellectuals in the development of ecology movement was primary. Exchange of knowledge, information, professional skill and human resources, as well as altruism, were of particular importance. Activists tried to unlock the intellectual potential, which later became the principal force of environmental subpolitics in Russia.

Only at the start of perestroika, when the country was shaken by a row of ecological disasters (Chernobyl disaster, pollution of the Baikal, loss of the Aral Sea), mass media began to speak openly about the real ecology situation in the country. According to M. Shkondin, social and political conditions for the satisfaction of public needs began to take shape at the same time with development of public interest towards true ecological information in the country (Shkondin, 2009).

The period of disclosure of ecological information at the national level began with the report of soviet experts on the consequences of Chernobyl disaster presented at IAEA meeting in London in 1986. At that time journalists' professional aspirations for sensations exerted material influence on the expansion of publicity concerning eco-information in the Soviet Union. Accidents, disasters, low efficiency of nature conservation measures stimulated the emergence of the civil society's need to monitor the ecological situation. This need furthered the promotion of ecology movement, which, in its turn, caused the adjustment of environmental journalism functions and the creation of specialized environmental mass media, both national and local, at the turn of 1990s.

At that time regional, territorial and republican state nature conservation committees together with environmental organizations founded their periodicals and bulletins (Kokhanova, 2007).

Unprecedented activation of ecology movement in the end of 1980s was caused by political reforms of M. Gorbachev which led to weakening. Ecology movement in Russia of that period is characterized by large-scale emergence of nature conservation units which differed in structure (funds, associations, clubs, committee, unions, communities, etc.) and area of activity (environmental education, promotion of environmental knowledge, scientific and technical and practical nature conservation activities, organization of natural science club movements, public control of nature conservation legislation, etc.).

In 1988 there appeared Socio-Ecological Union, the largest association of nongovernmental environmental organizations, and international nature conservation organization World Wildlife Fund (WWF) launched its first projects in Russia. In view of the changes in political and economical contexts, collapse of the Soviet Union, economic and market reforms of the 1990s, ecology movement began slightly changing and becoming politicized.

The scale of ecology movement of the 1990s was the result of increase in the level of awareness and social activity of people, which, in its turn, became an incentive for active development of environmental communication formats, including environmental journalism. Ecological problems were mentioned in the articles more and more often, they became an election platform for certain deputies, groups and parties. In the context of radical changes in social, political and economic life of the country, the community needed to analyse what was going on, what caused analytical genres to appear in environmental journalism. Development of environmental area in journalism revealed the demand for specially trained journalists and authors from a community of experts which were expected to give scientifically-based ecological problems solving proposals.

DISCUSSIONS

The end of the 1980s became a crucial point in world ecology history. Ecological disasters (Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, loss of the Aral Sea) showed that human influence on the environment became threatening. Society started to realise that the main environmental problem is the man. Natural and technogenic disasters were constantly monitored by journalists and received their constant attention. Global scale of ecological problems was one of the main factors which promoted the formation and development of environmental journalism as a separate genre.

Another factor (as a result of the global scale of ecological problems) which had significant influence on the development of Russian and world environmental journalism is increased role of nongovernmental sector on all levels in the end of the 1980s. Ecology movement in Russia of that period is characterised by mass emergence of nature conservation units.

Emergence and acceleration of the phenomenon of environmental journalism in the system of Russian mass media is usually associated with the 1990s. It is this period of history of modern Russia that “entailed profound transformations of principal society subsystems which resulted in the emergence of new economical, political social and other institutions in the country” (Savitskaya, 2009), including ecological institutions.

The phenomenon of environmental journalism was studied at different times by Russian scientists and media experts (Berlova, 2000; Kolesnikova, 2003; Kochineva, 1999; Syzova 2007; Syzova, Davydova, 2008; Zakharova, 2008; Kokhanova, 2007 et al) and foreign researchers (Fridmann, 1988; Cox, 2010; Lyon, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Chapman, 1997; Hanson, 1993 et al). The phenomenon was studied partially, usually in the view of journalism activities and theory of journalism and mass communication. However, environmental journalism has never been studied thoroughly and consecutively in terms of history of ecology movement development.

Obvious fragmentariness and scantiness of available information compels to examine the role and participation of social ecology movement as an important factor of the development of Russian environmental journalism more thoroughly. Current development of the green movement in Russia with international ecology organizations as leaders (Greenpeace, WWF and Bellona) and its information policy in Russian mass media and social networks are a promising subject for a separate research.

CONCLUSION

Environmental journalism appeared in Russia in the end of the 19th century, in Russian Empire, when a number of military and scientific expeditions were sent to the Caucasus and Asia and the first activists, scientists and travellers, acted as editors and authors of the first environmentally-oriented periodicals. At that time and during the subsequent period eco-activists and their publishing business were mainly supported by the university intellectuals.

With the emergence of reserve management and nature conservation committee under the Imperial Geographical Society nature conservation drew the attention at the supreme power level: projects of nature reserve establishment received financing, special scientific groups were created, nature conservation bulletins were published, environmentally-oriented children's press appeared. Inclusion of the nature into the hierarchy of socio-political values can be explained by the influence of religion and peasant tradition of regarding "provider mother soil" with reverence and respect (Zakharova, 2008). This tradition took root in the mind of a significant part of the country's population consisting of former serfs.

The Soviet period with its antireligiousness, anthropocentrism and orientation towards raw materials economy levelled the importance of nature by blocking the access to information, introducing censorship and propagandizing the stereotype of a soviet man as conqueror of nature. However, these measures did not slow down the development of environmental journalism; on the contrary, they stimulated the emergence of literary and narrative genres in it and appearance of brilliant environmentally-oriented journalists and writers. A sequence of technogenic disasters, collapse of the Soviet regime and removal of bans on environmental information gave a powerful incentive to the development of sensational and analytical environmental journalism. Vigorous activity of nongovernmental sector stimulated the emergence of specialized ecology mass media on the media market, as well as a new generation of journalists, ecology experts. Thereby, the development of environmental journalism in the 1990s was conditioned by social order for new quality and content in the system "nature – economy – society". Almost at the same time with the implementation of new communication formats the process of theoretical comprehension of "environmental journalism" category began.

Thus, the merit of social ecology movement consists not only in its influence on the development of a consistent nature conservation system in Russia. Apart from its principal function of nature protection, throughout the century ecology movement involved the best of the intellectuals, promoted scientific discoveries, stimulated the need of the society to receive true environmental information, and gave rise to a separate type of journalism which was able to satisfy that need.

Today Russian environmental journalism covers the activities of individuals, social groups and power institutions aimed at the implementation of environmental policy: recounts eco-competitive fight, ecologisation of various areas of social life, measures taken to provide eco-safety, ecological problems and ways to solve them. Due to social ecology movement environmental journalism is now an independent political player and actor covering political relations in "society-nature" system.

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